

Are women barking up the wrong tree? A case study of undergraduate and graduate women  
majoring in forest resources

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Abstract

This case study uses Valian's conceptualization of gender schemas as a framework to better understand women's experiences in forest resources at one institution in the eastern part of the United States. All of the women who participated in this study faced challenges of how fit in to an academic department that is male dominated and a reality that mirrored the forestry profession. Gender schemas were in place indicating that gender roles and expectations of men and women in forest resources are socialized even prior to entering the academic preparation program. Gender was a present theme in all aspects of the academic experience for participants from interactions with family, faculty members, and peers to their classroom textbooks, equipment use, and internships. This study found that participants responded to the entrenched gender in forest resources through responses such as green strategies and/or clothing alterations to be congruent with societal expectations in forest resources. Many of these participants' experiences demonstrated the accumulation of disadvantage and how gender is socially constructed and not isolated to a singular experience. Forest resources and other male-dominated academic programs need to evaluate current policy and processes around gender.